

Testimony in Support of: House Bill 6105:
An Act Concerning Access to Original Birth Certificates by Adult Adopted Persons

Submitted by:
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Dear Christie M. Carpino, and members of the House Planning and Development Committee,

My name is Andrew M. Cislo, PhD and I live in Cromwell, CT. It's difficult for people who have not been adopted to understand the importance of having an original, unaltered copy of one's birth certificate. This is mainly because, for most people, possession of their birth certificate seems like a birthright because - it is! Imagine being legally barred from knowing who your mother or father is. Imagine having no understanding of the ethnic group into which you were born. I mean it! Please take a few moments to consider what your life might be like without this information. How important is your mother to you? How important is your ethnic identity? Sadly, having legal documentation of one's origin is not a birthright shared by all in Connecticut, as there is discrimination in the law systemically harming certain people who were adopted as children. The law is arbitrary and cruel and the negative outcomes are well-documented in the research literature.

Lack of an original, unaltered birth certificate is an enormous issue for adult adoptees like me. It is critical to our understanding of ourselves and our health and well-being. I began an earnest search for my birth family when I was in my early twenties. This search came to its conclusion in my late forties – over 25 years later. By that time, unrecognized childhood trauma of abandonment and missed developmental milestones directly due to being severed from my family information had rendered me disabled. It was not that my adoptive parents were not good people, but they could not have and should not have been expected to substitute for my genetic heritage. I had lost so much. By the time I discovered my birth mother through DNA testing, without the help of an original unaltered birth certificate, she was dead. Me and my half sisters and a brother that I met once discovering her identity on my own, had missed out on a life shared together. For no good reason. Mom wanted to know me, even if she was concerned that her existence might be seen as an intrusion into my life a grown man. The law kept me from my mother and her from me. It kept me from knowing my brothers and sisters. It allowed unnecessary secrets to be kept which directly resulted in my poor health and disability.

After I met my maternal siblings, the laws in the state where I was adopted changed to allow me obtain my original unaltered birth certificate. Of course, it was too late to do me any good. Through further DNA testing, I was able to identify my birth father – the man whose image I would grow into as I aged. He had died of covid-19 just weeks before I confirmed his identity. Too late again. I was too late, not because of a lack of effort but because I was legally blocked by cruel and antiquated laws that take the wrong side of this adoption issue. My father wanted me. He wanted to raise me, but wasn't given the opportunity. I will go to my grave having never met

my mother or my father and having never taken my rightful place both within my family and my ethnic group.

Please stop doing this to adoptees. We did not make the choice to sever our family connections. Others did, often due to short-term difficulties. Don't legally require long-term "solutions" to short-term problems.

I urge you to support House Bill 6105 so that adult adoptees like me don't suffer a lifetime of pain for not knowing their genetic and ethnic origins. Giving access to original birth certificates to adult adoptees without qualification is the reasonable and ethical thing to do.

Thank you for your consideration.

Andrew M. Cislo, PhD